

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 03406 160204Z

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TAGS: ELAB, MX

SUBJECT: LABOR DEMONSTRATIONS

REF: MEXICO 2951

1. MARCH 20 IS CELEBRATED AS GODFATHER'S DAY IN MEXICO, WHICH TRADITIONALLY AND SOCIALLY CONNOTES SOMETHING MORE THAN A SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS OBLIGATION FROM ONE MAN OR ONE WOMAN TO ANOTHER VERY CLOSE FRIEND. IRONICALLY, THIS DAY, DIA DE LOS COMPADRES, MAY BE A DAY OF VIOLENCE RATHER THAN A DAY OF FRATERNAL BROTHERHOOD. THE CONGRESS OF LABOR HAD ADVISED THEIR MEMBERS TO APPEAR IN THE NATIONAL SQUARE, EL ZOCALO, ON SATURDAY, MARCH 10. SIMILARLY, A DISSIDENT MARXIST-LED GROUP OF ELECTRIC POWER WORKERS UNION MEMBERS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS, HAVE IRREVOCABLY DECREED THAT THEY TOO WILL DEMONSTRATE EN MASSE AT THE PLAZA REPUBLICA AND THEN PARADE TO THE ZOCALO ON THE SAME DAY. THE DISSIDENT GROUP, COMPRISED OF NUMEROUS INDEPENDENT LEFTIST TRADE UNIONS AND UNIVERSITY SOCIALIST ORGANIZATIONS HAVE NOT BACKED DOWN FROM THEIR INTENT TO PUBLICLY EXPRESS THEIR DISSASTISFACTION OVER THE OUSTER OF THEIR COMRADES FROM THE LEADERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF ELECTRIC POOWER WORKERS UNION. ON THE SURFACE THIS APPEARS TO BE A BITTER INTRA-UNION FUED BETWEEN THE PRI PARTY LABOR UNION LOYALISTS AND THE ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT DISENCHANTED. HOWEVER, THE PROBLEM IS DEEPER. THE BITTERNESS THAT EXISTS BETWEEN

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PAGE 02 MEXICO 03406 160204Z

THE FIDEL VELAZQUEZ LOYALISTS AND THE DISSIDENT LABOR

UNION FACTION HAS ALL THE EARMARKS OF RESULTING IN A VIOLENT CONFRONTATION. A SENIOR LABOR OFFICIAL OF THE CONGRESS OF LABOR TOLD THE LABATT ON MARCH 15 THAT SOMEWHERE BETWEEN TWENTY AND THIRTY THOUSAND WORKERS COULD CONVERGE AT THE ZOCALO ON MARCH 20 AND THAT HE WAS REASONABLY CERTAIN THAT THE DISSIDENT GROUP WOULD PARADE THEIR SUPPORTERS TO THE SAME PLACE AT ROUGHLY THE SAME TIME. HE WOULD NOT VENTURE AN OPINION ABOUT THE LIKELIHOOD OF VIOLENCE. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THE FEDERAL DISTRICT HAS NOT YET ANNOUNCED ANY PERMISSION OR RULES OF CONDUCT FOR EITHER DEMONSTRATION. CONFLICTING OPINIONS EXIST OVER THE OUTCOME. SOME EMBASSY STAFFERS BELIEVE THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT CONGRESS OF LABOR GROUP'S STANCE WILL PREVAIL AND FORCE THE FEDERAL DISTRICT AUTHORITIES TO PROHIBIT THE MARXIST-LED GROUP FROM CARRYING OUT THEIR DEMONSTRATION. ANOTHER OPINION WITHIN THE EMBASSY IS THAT THE PRI CONGRESS OF LABOR GROUP WILL BE DISSUADED FROM DEMONSTRATING ON MARCH 20 AND CONVINCED TO SHOW THEIR ENTHUSIASM ON MARCH 21, BIRTHDAY OF BENITO JUAREZ AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED. MEANWHILE, FIDEL VELAZQUEZ, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CTM, HAS CONVENIENTLY ABSENTED HIMSELF FROM THE COUNTRY, ATTENDING AN ICFTU MEETING IN LUXEMBOURG.

2. COMMENT: USUALLY, PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA HAS BEEN SKILLFUL ENOUGH TO AVOID THIS TYPE OF CONFRONTATION WITHOUT LOSING THE VIABILITY OF THE PRI'S REVOLUTIONARY IMAGE. NEVERTHELESS, IT NOW LOOKS AS IF ECHEVERRIA MAY HAVE TO ALLOW BOTH DEMONSTRATIONS TO TAKE PLACE COUNTING ON THE POLICE TO PHYSICALLY BLOCK AN ENCOUNTER AT THE ZOCALO. THIS ITSELF COULD PRODUCE INCIDENTS WHICH WILL FRESHEN THE MEMORIES OF THE CITIZENRY ABOUT THE REPRESSION BEFORE THE 1968 OLYMPICS FOR WHICH ECHEVERRIA IS BLAMED.
THOMPSON

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